

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Environmental Assessment
PacifiCorp Power Line Amendment Right-of-way
April 2016**

PREPARING OFFICE

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Worland Field Office



Introduction

Identifying Information

Title, EA number, and type of project:

PacifiCorp Power Line Amendment Right-of-way

DOI-BLM-WY-R010-2016-0014-EA

Type of Project: Right-of-way Power Line Amendment Application

General Location of Proposed Action:

6th PM, Washakie County, Wyoming,

T. 46 N., R. 91 W.,

sec. 6, lots 9, 11, 12, 13, and 16;

T. 47 N., R. 91 W.,

sec. 28, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$;

sec. 29, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$;

sec. 31, lot 12, SE $\frac{1}{4}$;

sec. 32, N $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, E $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, and NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$.

Name and Location of Preparing Office:

Worland Field Office

101 S. 23rd St.

Worland, WY 82401

Lease/Serial/Case file number:

WYW-069509

Applicant Name:

PacifiCorp; 1407 W. North Temple, Suite 110; Salt Lake City, UT 84116

Background Information:

PacifiCorp has submitted a SF 299 Amendment Application and Plan of Development (POD) to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Worland Field Office proposing to amend their existing power line ROW, serial number WYW-069509, located in the Cottonwood Creek Oil Field, Washakie County, Wyoming.

The existing power line would include 15,518.86 feet in length, 25 feet in width, involving a total ROW of 8.91 acres, more or less. In the 1980's, Pacific Power and Light (now known as

PacifiCorp) submitted as built maps and cooperated with BLM to permit any unauthorized use across public land that was built during a period of progressive oil and gas development in the Big Horn Basin. For reason's unknown, not all the unauthorized lines were permitted and the as built maps are no longer available.

The proposed activities would occur on lands administered by the BLM, Worland Field Office. No additional ground disturbance is necessary as this is an existing power line on public lands.

Purpose and Need for Action:

The need for the right-of-way action is established by the BLM's responsibility under Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as Amended (FLPMA) to respond to a request for a right-of-way (ROW) grant and to ensure the activity protects the natural resources of public lands and prevents unnecessary or undue degradation. The purpose of the proposed action is for the BLM to respond to the request.

Decision to be made:

The Authorized Officer (AO) must determine whether or not to approve the existing right-of-way power line amendment grant and thus grant authorization of the existing power line across public lands. The AO could decide not to issue a grant if it would cause unnecessary or undue degradation to the public lands, or if it would threaten to violate another Federal law.

If it is decided to issue the grant, the AO must decide what Terms and Conditions, would apply to the grant. Terms and Conditions could include specification of construction, design, mitigation measures, and abandonment/reclamation activities for the proposed project area.

Finally, the AO must determine whether or not the proposed action could result in significant impact to the human environment. If not, this determination would be documented in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI.) If the impacts could be significant, an environmental impact statement would be necessary.

Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: Worland Field Office Resource Management Plan

Date Approved: September 21, 2015

This plan has been reviewed to determine if the proposed action conforms to the land use plan as required by 43 CFR 1610.5. The proposed action conforms to the Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan for Worland dated September 21, 2015. The decisions in the Worland Resource Management Plan (WRMP) provide overall management direction for resources on BLM-administered land in the Worland Field Office, Wyoming.

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decisions:

WRMP/ROD record numbers:

6023, The preferred location of new ROW will be in or adjacent to existing disturbed areas associated with existing ROW or high traffic gravel roads or highways, where possible.

6029, Manage 1,767,274 acres as ROW avoidance areas (Map 3-24). Manage PHMAs as ROW avoidance areas for new ROW or SUA permits (799,391 acres). Within PHMAs where

new ROWs/SUAs are necessary, locate new ROWs/SUAs within designated RMP corridors or adjacent to existing ROWs/SUAs where technically feasible. Subject to valid existing rights, including non-federal land inholdings, locate new, required ROWs/SUAs adjacent to existing ROWs/SUAs or where impacts to Greater Sage-Grouse are minimized. Work with proponents to design ROW applications to protect Greater Sage-Grouse.

The Worland RMP (pgs 103-109) delineates preferred right-of-way corridors, right-of-way avoidance areas, right-of-way exclusion area, and area available for right-of-way. The Worland RMP states that the BLM would manage public lands to meet transportation and ROW needs by providing opportunities to meet ROW demands while protecting important resources.

Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Plans or Other Environmental Analysis:

This Environmental Assessment (EA) is prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA) and complies with applicable regulations and laws passed subsequent to the Act. In addition, this EA is prepared utilizing the stipulations and format outlined in the BLM NEPA Handbook H-1790-1 (BLM 1988). The Proposed Action and alternatives would comply with relevant federal, state, and local regulations, plans, and policies.

Title V of FLPMA, sec. 501. [43 U.S.C. 1761] (a) The Secretary, with respect to the public lands (including public lands, as defined in section 103(e) of this Act, which are reserved from entry pursuant to section 24 of the Federal Power Act (16 U.S.C. 818)) [P.L. 102-486, 1992] and, the Secretary of Agriculture, with respect to lands within the National Forest System (except in each case land designated as wilderness), are authorized to grant, issue, or renew rights-of-way over, upon, under, or through such lands for— (4) systems for generation, transmission, and distribution of electric energy, except that the applicant shall also comply with all applicable requirements of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission under the Federal Power Act, including part 1 thereof (41 Stat. 1063; 16 USC 791a-825r)[PL 102-486,1992]; (7) such other necessary transportation or other systems or facilities which are in the public interest and which require rights-of-way over, upon, under, or through such lands.

43 CFR §2800 It is BLM's objective to grant rights-of-way under the regulations in this part to any qualified individual, business, or government entity and to direct and control the use of rights-of-way on public lands in a manner that:

- (a)Protects the natural resources associated with public lands and adjacent lands, whether private or administered by a government entity;
- (b) Prevents unnecessary or undue degradation to public lands;
- (c) Promotes the use of rights-of-way in common considering engineering and technological compatibility, national security, and land use plans; and
- (d) Coordinates, to the fullest extent possible, all BLM actions under the regulations in this part with state and local governments, interested individuals, and appropriate quasi-public entities.

The BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H.1601-1) states that the BLM must consider the management of lands with wilderness characteristics during the land use planning process. The criteria used to identify these lands are essentially the same criteria used for determining wilderness characteristics for wilderness study areas (WSA). However, the authority set forth in Section 603(a) of FLPMA to complete the three part wilderness review process (inventory, study, and report to Congress) expired on October 21, 1993; therefore, FLPMA does not apply

to new WSA proposals and consideration of new WSA proposals on BLM-administered public lands is no longer valid. As required by FLPMA, Section 201, the alternatives were evaluated and screened for wilderness characteristics.

Scoping, Public Involvement and Issues:

Scoping

The right-of-way amendment power line application was received by the Worland Field Office on September 14, 2015 and was considered complete on February 23, 2016. Based on the size and routine nature of the proposed project, it was determined that external scoping was not necessary. Notification of preparation of this EA was also provided on the Wyoming BLM internet NEPA register (<http://www.wy.blm.gov/nepa/search/index.php>) on March 7, 2016. Staff specialists reviewed the proposal and identified impacts and appropriate mitigation measures.

Issues Identified

How would the proposed right-of-way amendment affect cultural resources eligible or unevaluated for the NRHP?

Proposed Action and Alternatives

Description of the No Action Alternative:

No Action implies that on-going development and activities would be allowed to continue in the area, but the proposed action would be disallowed. Additional actions would be considered by the BLM on a case-by-case basis.

Description of the Proposed Action:

The Proposed Action would consider the right-of-way application complete, and BLM would consider whether to approve the ROW as submitted with special terms and conditions consistent with 43 CFR 2805.12, as well as specific mitigation and monitoring measures for the proposed project area, which may be defined through the NEPA analysis.

PacifiCorp has submitted a SF 299 Amendment Application and Plan of Development (POD) to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Worland Field Office proposing to amend ROW, serial number WYW-069509 to provide electrical service to various wells located in the Cottonwood Creek Oil Field. The requested existing unauthorized portion of ROW is 15,518.86 feet in length, 25 feet in width; involving a total of 8.91 acres more or less. The existing line consists of 47 poles and other appurtenant equipment necessary for an overhead distribution line located in the Cottonwood Creek Oil Field.

These lines are considered by PacifiCorp to be standard 20.8 kV overhead distribution lines, no additional ground disturbance is necessary as this is an existing power line on public lands.

Summary of Proposed Acreage:

Implementation of the proposed action for the power lines would involve total acreage as shown below:

Right-of-way	Existing Power Line 25' right-of-way width	
WYW-069509	25' x 15,518.86'	8.91 acres
Total Acres		8.91 acres

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT and ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

This chapter characterizes the resources and uses that have the potential to be affected by the proposed action, followed by a comparative analysis of the direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of the alternatives. **Direct** effects are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place. **Indirect** effects are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable. **Cumulative** impacts result from the incremental impacts of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.

Introduction

General Setting and Geographic Scope of the project area

The project area is located within Washakie County, Wyoming. Cottonwood Creek Oil Field is approximately 6 miles east of Worland, Wyoming. Land use consists of oil and gas production, livestock grazing, hunting and motorized recreational activities. The proposed activity should not interfere with current land use. Vegetation varies from eroded, barren hillsides to gently rolling or flat areas with a saltbrush, sage brush, and perennial grass vegetative community.

Resources Not Analyzed

Resources and features not present or not effected by the proposed action or alternatives, and not discussed in this EA, include: Environmental Justice, Prime or Unique Farmlands, Flood Plains, Native American Religious Concerns, riparian areas, Class I visual management areas, Class I Airsheds, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wetlands, Wilderness Values or Inventoried Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, Land Use/Access, Air Quality, Geology & Mineral Resources, Threatened and Endangered, BLM Special Status Plant Species, Invasive, Non Native Species Noxious Weeds, Rangelands, Paleontology, Recreation and Visual Resource Management; Special Designations (Including ACECs, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, Wilderness Study Areas), Soils, Water Resources (Water Quality and Ground Water, Floodplains, Wetlands and Riparian Zones), Fish/Wildlife (Including Threatened, Endangered, Candidate and BLM Sensitive Species), Socioeconomic, Wastes - Hazardous or Solid , Public Health and Safety, Fuels, and Forests.

Resources Carried Forward for Analysis

Cultural Resources, Traditional Cultural Properties, Native American Religious Concerns

Issue

How would the proposed right-of-way amendment affect cultural resources eligible or unevaluated for the NRHP?

Affected Environment

The area of potential effect (APE) is defined by the Wyoming State Protocol Agreement between the BLM and the SHPO (State Protocol) as the geographic area or areas within which an undertaking may directly or indirectly cause alterations in the character or use of historic properties (cultural resources eligible or unevaluated for the National Register of Historic Places),

if any such properties exist. The APE is influenced by the scale and nature of an undertaking and may be different for different kinds of effects caused by the undertaking.

The APE was defined for the current undertaking as the existing surface disturbance, approximately 8.91 acres, or the existing unauthorized portion of the ROW that is 15,518.86 feet in length and 25 feet in width. Two portions of the APE, the south-trending power line segments off the main northeast power line were included in previous class III inventories (BLM cultural project #1596042N and 1597045N, 010-2014-002 and 010-2014-044). Approximately 4,020 feet or 9.25 acres were included in these previous inventories to determine effects to historic properties. No cultural resources were identified. The remaining estimated 11,499 feet of the main northeast power line (APE) has not been inventoried for cultural resources. Site density is low in the surrounding area and previous ground disturbance has modified the surface so extensively that the probability of finding intact cultural resources within the APE is negligible.

Direct and Indirect Effects

No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, the authorization of the proposed action would not occur. No resulting effects on cultural resources would be expected to occur beyond the current situation.

Proposed Action

Impacts occur to historic properties when a proposed project would directly or indirectly alter any of the qualities of that property that qualify it for inclusion in the NRHP. No impacts from the proposed action would be expected. Per the State Protocol at Appendix B.5, issuance of ROW for existing developments that do not authorize new surface disturbance is exempt from class III inventory.

No historic properties were identified within the project's APE. As with the No Action alternative, the Proposed Action will have no effect on historic properties. Unknown cultural resources would not be affected as surface disturbance is not authorized.

Mitigation

As described in the Proposed Action, unknown cultural resources would not be affected as surface disturbing activities are not authorized. For the protection of potential unknown cultural resources the standard cultural stipulations apply and are included in the conditions of approval. The standard cultural stipulations include measures for mitigating adverse effects discovered during surface disturbing activities.

Cumulative Effects

Construction and development of Rights-of-Way (including power lines) impact cultural resources through ground disturbance, unauthorized collection, and visual intrusion of the setting of historic properties. Potential impacts to historic properties are mitigated under the Proposed Action. Since there would be no direct or indirect effects on known historic properties, there can be no cumulative effects.

Tribes, Individuals, Organizations, or Agencies Consulted:

List of Persons, Agencies and Organizations Consulted

Name	Purpose & Authorities for Consultation or Coordination
Mary Hopkins	SHPO Section 106
Brian Young, Randy Harry	PacifiCorp

List of Preparers

Name	Title
Darci Stafford	Natural Resource Specialist, Fluid Minerals
Dora Ridenour	Archaeologist
Ted Igleheart	Wildlife Biologist
Leslie Coleman	Natural Resource Specialist, Invasive Species and Soils
Adam Babcock	Recreation/Visual Specialist
Karen Hepp	Range Management Specialist (T&E/Sensitive Plants)
Cam Henrichsen	Range Management Specialist
Jim Critz	Civil Engineer
Jared Dalebout	Hydrologist
Connie Craft	Realty Specialist
Eve Warren	Natural Resource Specialist, Fire Ecology
Joe Scyphers	Geologist
Jim Gates	Forester
Franklin Sanders	Petroleum Engineer
Holly Elliott	Planning & Environmental Coordinator
Franklin Sanders	Acting, Assistant Field Manager, Lands and Minerals
John Elliott	Assistant Field Manager, Resources